Comparative and International Education

A personal account

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The place and experience of comparative and international education is considered in relation to traditions of foundational studies in education. Experience built up over recent decades at the University of Sydney is examined as a case study that sheds light on key conceptual and research developments in the field between 1970 and 2000. In particular, the Sydney tradition of foundational studies as a component within teacher education programs is explored, in light of debates and shifting rationales. The decline of conventional comparative studies in education, and the upsurge of interest in international education is considered, along with recent paradigmatic shifts. The impact of globalisation is acknowledged, as are changes facing education professionals who work in an increasingly global context.

INTRODUCTION

The articles in this special issue of Change consider the recent experience of the four core foundations in conventional education studies – history, philosophy, psychology and sociology – as well as the more eclectic fields of curriculum studies, and comparative and international education. As an area of study, comparative and international education does not sit easily with them. In this contribution I want to locate selected aspects of the development of the field in the English-speaking world, relating these to some contemporary trends and concerns. But I want to begin, as one whose work in the area has been centred at the University of Sydney, by commenting on the Sydney tradition in comparative and international education.

As other articles in this issue point out, the Sydney University pioneers in initial teacher education looked to produce the ‘scholar teacher’ – whose grasp of education included both mastery of professional skills and scholarly understanding of education as a psychological and cultural phenomenon. Our pioneers found just the right ticket in the North American concept of the educational foundations. Chicago and Columbia in particular were looked to as centres in which discipline-based studies of these four
foundational fields made up an intellectual core not only for the dispassionate analysis of educational phenomena, but also for their promotion and reform through a university-educated teaching force. The shadow of John Dewey loomed large over all of this, and we should remind ourselves of the mediation to Sydney of much of the Chicago and Columbia experience via Illinois through W. F. Connell, Professor of Education at Sydney from 1955 to 1976.

The fact that the four core foundations were clearly established disciplinary fields of study was also significant at a time when the attempt was being made to establish the study and analysis of education as a robust application of the social sciences and humanities. Grounding core educational studies in well-established disciplines was partly designed to ease some of the misgivings aired at the time about the place of education studies at University level.

At the University of Sydney, comparative and international education was included in the undergraduate canon of foundational studies through the general good fortune of having a strong staffing base. W. F. Connell’s interest in the field was of fundamental importance. Following the untimely death of Sydney’s first appointee in comparative education, Trevor Miller in 1970, a fairly rapid succession of appointments came with John Cleverley in 1972, Phillip Jones in 1975 and Francis Wong in 1977. Their work with pre-service teacher education students sat somewhat uneasily alongside the four foundations – comparative education was clearly not a single-discipline foundation in the sense that each of the others were. There was also a deal of uneasiness among profession-based colleagues, whose commitment to the professional development of teachers looked to the local context alone as the relevant setting for professional immersion and study. The most positive construction might be that teacher educators saw comparativists as able to provide some exotic relief, metaphorically taking students away for a while, making good use along the way of their middle-class guilt about global poverty. For those more committed to foundational studies in education, comparative education courses were undoubtedly accepted as capable of developing in undergraduate students the generic skills of research, analysis, writing and cross-cultural awareness so prized as hoped-for outcomes from the foundations.

Anywhere else, it was at the postgraduate level that comparative and international education was pursued. Their inclusion at Sydney at undergraduate level was all but unique, although some free-standing options – generally under the rubric of cultural or inter-cultural studies – were often available in pre-service programs in the English-speaking world, usually the product of an individual academic’s personal interest in having them included. This is not to say that at Sydney postgraduate studies were neglected. Far from it, as evidenced by robust enrolments in the 1970s and 1980s.

The point of all of this is that if we are to answer the question ‘whatever happened to the disciplines of education?’ for the four core foundations we can look to the Sydney experience for many clues. For comparative and international education, the Sydney experience can only take us so far.
THE THEORY-METHOD LINK IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

Comparative education has a keen sense of its history. Its nineteenth century positivist origins are well-documented, dating from the calls of Jullien to apply Enlightenment reason to nation-building and to securing national advantage (Fraser 1964). If the early French empire felt threatened with its perceptions of Prussian military and economic superiority, much of its intellectual response was to investigate the social origins of that perceived superiority. Ascendant bursts of nationalistic fervour in the academies of nineteenth century Europe fuelled comparative studies, mainly with a view to providing the kinds of historical explanations powerful enough to permit the productive borrowing of economic, social and educational policies. In many senses, the origins of comparative education rest with those of modernity itself, and its grand expression in the establishment of the modern school system. As nation states enacted their great pieces of enabling legislation for free, secular and compulsory schooling, they did so on the basis of highly organised and detailed studies of developments elsewhere (for an overview of issues related to borrowing, see Holmes 1981).

The rampant desire to study and borrow educational policies and practices was nowhere more evident than in Meiji restoration Japan, where the impulse to modernise through westernisation saw in education a promising pathway to prosperity, national advantage and national pride (Stone 1981, p. 20). But Japan provides just one example, and the past 150 years have seen educational borrowing, and the principles that should guide it, as the fundamental point of comparative education.

Michael Sadler, Director of the British Office of Special Inquiries and Reports between 1895 and 1903, set up the English agenda for comparative education in his landmark lecture of 1900 How far can we learn anything of practical value from the study of foreign systems of education? It was this lecture that provided what must be the world’s most frequently-set quotation for education undergraduates to discuss at exam time: ‘In education, what happens outside the classroom is as important as what happens inside.’ Sadler’s interpretive approach to understanding educational phenomena – binding up what today we would call social, cultural and historical studies – had an enormous impact on what was to follow, not only through the work of his most famous student Isaac Kandel but also on those who took up his approach at Teachers College Columbia. For Sadler, the main intellectual challenge was to explain that the economic and cultural uniqueness of each nation state produced a unique system of and approach to education. Policymakers could not adopt foreign practices at will, and hence Sadler’s famous admonition:

We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant (cited in Trehewey 1976, pp. 18-19).
Uncritical borrowing in education, then, was understood to be an affront to the unique cultural underpinnings of education as lived and experienced. Uncritical borrowing was also a key explanation for policy failure in education: 'adoption without adaptation' was the frequent complaint. The major intellectual trajectory following Sadler's invocations is found in the work of Nicholas Hans and Isaac Kandel in London (whose influential students Edmund King and Brian Holmes in turned trained a global network of post-war scholars in comparative education, including Sydney staffers Francis Wong and Anthony Welch and exerting a powerful influence on others including W. F. Connell and Trevor Miller).

Despite significant differences in their approach, both Hans (1949; 1951; 1963) and Kandel (1930; 1933; 1955) set out to identify those factors determining the nature, indeed the 'national character', of education systems. What were those factors – historically grounded in economy, politics and culture – that combined to produce what was French about the French system, German about the German, English about the English? That historical grounding was fundamental to the work of Nicholas Hans, whose method of comparative analysis invariably adopted as a natural starting point the study of each national system separately, within its particular historical context, and its close connection with the development of national character and culture.

Much can be said about the influence of Hans and Kandel across the Atlantic, but the primary appeal seems to have been an aspect of their work that is much neglected. Both, but Hans in particular, were far from content to analyse difference in education. Rather, they were embarked on a methodological quest to discover universal laws governing the dynamics of education systems, or as Hans put it 'to discover the underlying principles which govern the development of all national systems of education' (Hans 1949, p.5). The United States proved to be fertile ground for bringing to a higher plane the quest for universal truths in educational analysis, Columbia again becoming a particular focus.

Two points stand out here. The first is the remarkable influence in the United States of Hans' critique of the fundamentally elitist character of European education. Again and again, Hans railed against the appalling waste of human talent arising from the inherent elitism of education across Europe. From 1942, the US Department of State was busily shaping its post-war policy objectives for cultural and educational diplomacy, and the democratisation of secondary education throughout Europe (including the United Kingdom) was very high on the list (Ninkovich 1981, esp. pp. 73 ff). Subsequent United States policy stances concerning the Marshall Plan, UNESCO programs and, later on, World Bank funding for the rapid global expansion of secondary education can all be traced back to this period (Jones 1988, pp. 117, 136; Jones 1992, pp. 32 ff).

The second observation is not so obvious. It points to a direct line of influence from the work of Hans and Kandel to the United States modernisation and scientific schools of comparative education that served so well the hegemonic interests of the US from the 1950s onwards. They served as mediators in comparative education of the Enlightenment quest for reason and systematisation in human understandings and control of social life.
Thus to free educational thought and practice from the constraints of religious dogma or other forms of arbitrary prejudice or authority became key elements in the quest for social progress and control.

George Bereday, for instance, led those who attached themselves to the possibility that a scientific approach to comparative education could lead to accurate prediction, used in the sense that the problem in comparative education was not just one of borrowing on its own, but also of predicting likely outcomes on the basis of understanding the contexts of both ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ countries alike (Bereday 1964, p. 8).

The building up in United States comparative education of a structural functionalist basis for interpreting poverty and its causes was of enormous global significance. The battleground against communism, once the Marshall Plan had re-established order in the capitalist reconstruction of war-ravaged Europe, was unquestionably the rapidly decolonising world. The ‘policy vacuum’ arising from decolonisation was the direct concern of bilateral and multilateral aid, which needed a more sophisticated intellectual basis on which to operate, at least more sophisticated than that which flabby colonial administrators had been able to get away with.

Thus, the intellectual heirs of Durkheim and Parsons constructed a trajectory for the social construction of human happiness, a peaceful, progressive and prosperous world in which scientific reason would serve the core purpose of social evolution. It was sometimes attempted rather crudely. Julian Huxley, grandson of T.H. Huxley and a great advocate of the social engineering potential of biological evolution principles, sought to infuse his period as inaugural director general of UNESCO with an unrestrained view of UNESCO as an agent of social evolution, ‘equalising’ humanity’s evolutionary prospects by placing them on a single track to human peace and prosperity (Huxley 1947). The Vatican and Moscow saw to it that Huxley did not last long at UNESCO, but softer versions of such thinking exerted considerable influence in the decades that followed (Jones 1988, pp. 29 ff).

Subsequent attempts to construct tradition in order to overthrow it in the name of modernity might have been more subtle, however difficult that is to believe with our benefits of hindsight. Part of the smokescreen, of course, was the appeal to science and technology. Social policy, social progress, social science and education studies could all become scientific, technologised and objective. The scientific mindset, again, was to free us from dogma and prejudice, thereby speeding up the identification and removal of obstacles to human progress. The stubbornness of tradition, tradition’s reliance on passivity, dated moralities and irrelevant social relations all needed to face up to, and be vanquished by, the inevitable march of scientific values and technological efficiency (an excellent overview is Welch 1999).

It was only a matter of time for attempts to emerge to render comparative education a science. Hans, after all, had opened up the prospect of transcending the nation in comparative education, in his quest to discover those principles that underpin the development of all national systems of education, a quest for universality in which the study of national uniqueness and differentiation was merely a first step to understanding educational dynamics.
Brian Holmes at the University of London dominated the British post-war school, particularly through an astonishingly large and dispersed global network of graduates. Those who stuck to his method – an unashamedly positivist approach to problem solving in education – were promised the advantages of a set of logical steps in educational analysis and problem solving which drew heavily on Popperian hypothetico-deductive methodology. It was seductively straightforward in its attempt to develop scientific laws in comparative education through scientific principles and methods (Holmes 1965; Holmes 1981).

More inductive as a scientific approach was the work of Noah and Eckstein at Columbia whose essentially psychometric approach relied on the analysis of quantified data. The aim, again invoking Hans, was to displace any sense of nationality as variable in its own right. According to Noah ‘a comparative study is essentially an attempt as far as possible to replace the names of systems (countries) by the names of concepts (variables)’ (cited in Welch 1999, p. 32; see also Noah and Eckstein 1969).

What cannot be over-emphasised are the interactions between this quest for a scientific comparative education and the impact on comparative education of modernisation theories. McClelland’s 1961 study on The Achieving Society found fertile ground in the early 1960s establishment of human capital perspectives on explanations for economic productivity and growth, led by Theodore Schultz (1961; 1980) and Gary Becker (1964). The essential policy affinity of modernisation theory and human capital theory saw a cascade of American work in the 1960s that shaped the values, purposes and methods that defined the comparative education of the time. My study on the World Bank under Robert McNamara uncovered the importance at that time of a group of men, linked up through Cambridge Massachusetts, who saw eye-to-eye on many policy issues of modernisation and human capital formation. They related to each other throughout their careers; they were intelligent, academically-inclined men who had each moved into positions of economic and developmental influence: Robert McNamara, David Bell, Walt Rostow, Mac Bundy, Champion Ward, Ken Galbraith, Edward Mason, Phil Coombs and, later, Henry Kissinger (Jones 1992, p. 94). Most met with McNamara in October 1967 to consider Phil Coombs’ influential comparative education assessment of global policy trends and outcomes, published the following year as The world crisis in education: a systems analysis (Coombs 1968).

A TRADITION DIES?

By about 1970, the English-language North Atlantic school of comparative education had not only formed its intellectual base, but doubtless had reached its pinnacle of adherence and influence. What happened to that school of comparative education (and there were no real competitors at the time) can be a matter of debate.

One possibility is that from, say, 1980 there was a spectacular loss of interest in the intellectual basis of comparative education, its theory and method. Across the western academic world, from that date, it is exceptionally difficult to identify scholars working
strictly within the paradigm. It can be argued that, at the time, comparative education was not so much convincingly debunked; rather, scholars lost interest in it. Twenty years later, it is difficult to find examples of robust, scholarly comparative studies, of the kind addressed by the conventional paradigm. Cross-national or even cross-cultural comparisons of educational phenomena appear not to have been attempted for at least a generation. If there is a general exception, it is the upsurge of interest in conventional comparison currently in vogue in China and Hong Kong, prompted perhaps by China's re-emergence from isolation since the late 1970s. Perhaps worth noting, too, was the temporary fashion in the Reagan years to compare United States education (unfavourably) with apparently robust Japanese commitments to education (see, for example, White 1987). But, overall, the argument that twenty or more years ago people simply lost interest in the field as narrowly and precisely defined by its founding fathers, is highly appealing and contains many grains of truth. It is not so much that in the 1970s a new generation of scholars arrived or a new paradigm was quickly put in place. Rather, the old paradigm faded from relevance, not least because of its preoccupation with descriptive accounts of education systems and structures and its blatant neglect (in practice if not because of paradigmatic flaws) of educational processes and outcomes. It was not a paradigm that was grasped in order to inform better educational practice.

The second possibility is equally compelling, that many scholars with various kinds of international and cross-cultural interests in education continued to use the term comparative education as a convenient label, well-established with institutional recognition within university programs (especially at the graduate level), its prominent research journals, and its national scholarly associations. It was too good an infrastructure to jettison.

At Sydney, John Cleverley, Francis Wong and I had vigorous but friendly debates about what to do with and about all of this. John, ever the pragmatist, saw the institutional status of comparative education as conferring the advantage of having an umbrella term under which new approaches to research and teaching could be conducted, not least area studies – in no sense comparative, but grounded culturally in such disciplinary approaches as history, anthropology, politics and economics. John's unique approach to the study of education in China shows how such thinking could bear fruit (Cleverley 1985). Francis was more dutiful to the tradition (Wong 1973; 1980), and accepted the burden of teaching comparative education theory and method to the end of his career. He was fully aware, of course, that it was a dying tradition. I, for my part, tried from 1978 to persuade my colleagues to drop the term comparative education entirely from the Sydney program, but without success. Our compromise was to style our program comparative and international education. Why was I so excited about international education? I have to be extremely careful here, because I in no way wish to overstate my critique of comparative education. I was simply bored with it and wanted to get on with other things.
By the mid-1980s, the editor of the major journal in the field, the North American *Comparative Education Review*, was picking up major paradigmatic shifts in the articles being submitted (Altbach 1986). Philip Altbach, joined by his colleague at SUNY Buffalo Gail Kelly, conducted an analysis of those shifts between 1977 and 1986 (Kelly and Altbach 1986). They detected four principal directions:

- challenges to the nation-state as the exclusive research framework
- challenges to input-output models and dominant reliance on quantification
- challenges to structural functionalism
- the emergence of new research concerns, most notably gender, institutional studies and critique, the content and processes of schooling, and the legitimation of educational knowledge.

According to Kelly and Altbach (1986, p. 90) ‘prior to 1977 these issues scarcely entered the discourse of the field and were not promoted through its major journals or texts’. Since then, of course, comparative education has had its fair share of introspection, and this parallels all that we have heard to date about the foundational disciplines in education. It would be far too trite to argue that comparative education has been spared the crisis of disciplinariness. Sadler’s elegant construction in 1900 of a comparative inter-disciplinary mindset amounted to what we would readily call today an interpretive, social, historical and cultural approach to understanding education. You do not hear the argument very often today that the way to avoid banality is to go the conventional disciplinary route. But like all the foundations in education, those working in comparative education are joining in debates over postmodernity, postcolonialism and postdisciplinariness.

**INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

What opened up in Australia was an area of study that sought to apply elements of international relations theory to education. It began with an examination in 1976 that John Cleverley and I conducted for the ACER, published as a short monograph *Australia and international education* (Cleverley and Jones 1976). John, ever organised and focussed, quickly wrote his sections and headed for the UK on study leave. I remained at work trying to make sense of what we were doing as a whole. The result was a statement calling for a new branch of educational research, one that addressed the shaping of local history and culture amidst the fluidity of foreign influence. We wrote about colonial legacies in Australian education, the new Britannia looked for in nineteenth century Australia, and about the emergence of a new kind of patronage emerging from our post-war relations with the United States. We also wrote about Australia’s post-war educational relations with Asia and the Pacific, and the kinds of educational influence we
tried to exert, not least through the Colombo Plan and the bilateral aid program. We wrote about Australia’s role in constructing a new kind of global educational architecture, through such bodies as the Bretton Woods agencies, the UN specialised agencies, the OECD, and networks of scientific, technological and cultural exchanges. We looked at the overseas student question for Australia, and at current attempts to internationalise school curricula.

Ten years later, I felt confident enough to follow up the line of thinking with a somewhat idiosyncratic but more detailed account of Australia’s international relations in education, also for the ACER (Jones 1986). Surprisingly, the monograph was very extensively reviewed. Somehow its argument struck a chord: the study of international education was more than the sum of its thematic parts, especially its analysis of emerging thinking about nationalism, identity and cultural being fundamental to the pursuit of Australia’s external interests.

One part, for me, was of special interest – what I called the construction of a new kind of global educational architecture:

It is now possible to speak of an international system of influence powerful enough to bind up the educational destinies of the world’s peoples. If such a network of global influence limits the discretion of peoples to shape their own educational destinies and imposes its own solution to the material-moral dilemma facing educational policy, then it is worthy of investigation (Jones 1992, p. xiv).

This was just one person’s attempt to build into educational research a strong and vibrant ‘inter-national’ dimension in the face of the rapidly decomposing corpse of comparative education. What made international education more interesting (than comparative education) to a lot of people was the rapidly growing career structure emerging in Australia, a product of the increasing weight of international education as a federal and state policy concern. There are hosts of other stories, mainly about the dynamics of educational development and change in nominated countries or regions. These were what I called above ‘area studies’ in pointing to John Cleverley’s work on China, or indeed Trevor Miller (1968) and Francis Wong’s studies of education in Southeast Asia. But there were many other currents in the air, and we now return to the main theme of the reconstruction of comparative education.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

At the University of Sydney, two appointments in the field followed the retirements of Francis Wong and John Cleverley. Anthony Welch (1990-) and Nigel Bagnall (1994-) have brought much to Sydney of the emerging richness of the field. With Phillip Jones, they formed the International Institute for Educational Development (http://iied.edfac.usyd.edu.au) as a focus for their collective and combined work in teaching, research and extension. Welch, with his strong interests in the theory-method connection in comparative education, has sought in particular to put under critical
scrutiny much of the conventional paradigm, working closely with like-minded colleagues of the continental critical tradition (see, for example, Welch 2000). Also, much of the new way of thinking about that paradigm has been applied by Welch in his thoughtful account of Australian education (Welch 1996) with its particular emphasis on binding up economic, political and cultural means of understanding educational change. Bagnall, too, reflects new ways of thinking. His work on the International Baccalaureate is a pertinent example of emerging interest in cross-cultural educational endeavours of potentially global reach, even if at an élite level (Bagnall 1997). Further, his interest in post-compulsory schooling and the experiences of school leavers in comparative perspective has led to studies of keen policy interest (e.g. Bagnall 2000).

The 1990s have witnessed profound shifts in how we understand education in international perspective. The end of the Cold War, ushering in triumphant expressions of global capitalism, points to a rapidly globalising world. Globalisation, in and of itself but also as the burgeoning field in contemporary social sciences, is forcing various patterns of reflection in comparative and international education. The impact of globalisation is most marked as an area of investigation, as researchers rush to identify and assess the ‘globalisation effect’ on education around the world. For comparative education paradigms, however, much of the emerging focus of ‘globalisation studies’ had been anticipated in the field of international education over the preceding twenty years. Leslie Sklair at the London School of Economics has usefully identified four major research traditions shaping current conceptualisations of globalisation (Sklair 1998). His list usefully sheds light on major research currents in comparative and international education over the past two to three decades:

- First is a *world systems* approach, with the figure of Immanuel Wallerstein looming large, looking to the binding up of the world’s peoples into a single historical process of unequal economic, political and cultural relationships. In that tradition, it was Martin Carnoy (1974) who first attempted to apply world systems analysis to his notion of education as ‘cultural imperialism’.

- Second Sklair pointed to the impact of research on global culture formation, the shattering of culture being bound by senses of geographical identity and attachment, with new sources of and reference points for identity. What has happened to national as well as local identities in the face of global cultural dynamics, and is globalisation necessarily producing a mass, homogenised, media-driven global culture, or is the trend pointing downwards to the fragmentation of national cultures and identities to the local level?

- Third is what Sklair termed *global society* models, the notion of ‘one world’ with its long and varied history. Viewing the world from outer space, tackling pollution as no respecter of national borders, seeing poverty, war and crime as global issues are all part of a research tradition that looks to the world as the key unit of analysis. As David Held put it in 1995, ‘a democratic and just
human society on the global level, however utopian, seems to be the best long-term guarantee of the continued survival of humanity'. Thus, is the world one already, or is the task the construction of one world, building on impulses for international co-operation and the construction of a global architecture for peace, progress and the universal promotion of certain values and norms?

- Last Sklar points to the triumph of global capitalism, or at least the extending global reach of western capitalism, as a research theme of obvious significance. Of some significance has been the view that within capitalism alternatives to Anglo-US economic rationalism are many and varied, and in particular one can point to vibrant schools of comparative thought and analysis in continental Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and parts of East Asia looking to alternatives to the Thatcher-Reagan view of capitalist and democratic futures.

In a recent review, Michael Crossley examined the extent to which the four emerging research directions, identified by Kelly and Altbach over the 1977-1986 period, have been apparent in subsequent years (Crossley 1999). His starting point, significantly, was Carnoy’s (1974) *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, with its appeal to those interested in applying world systems analyses to educational change, especially in the ex-colonial world. Crossley also pointed to a significant post-1977 body of work in which the systematic application of qualitative research has asserted itself as a counterpoint to the dominant structural functionalist paradigm, work which constituted important early advances in applying interpretive traditions, critical theory and conflict studies (Apple 1978; Arnowe 1980; Weiler 1983). Crossley went on to argue that the four-fold framework proposed by Kelly and Altbach in 1986 remains useful as a means of identifying broad research work over the past two decades:

The challenge to the nation-state as the unit of analysis, for example, has been pursued through a multilevel strategy by Bray and Thomas (1995), a comparative, sub-regional, format by Fry and Kempner (1996) and through detailed qualitative studies by a new generation of advocates (see the contributors to Crossley and Vulliamy (1997)). Similarly, theoretical challenges to structural functionalism have advanced considerably through the work of scholars such as Paulston (1996) on social cartography; Cowen (1996), Masemann and Welch (1997) on post-modernity; and Watson (1996), Green (1997) and others, on globalisation and internationalism. Kelly’s (1984) pioneering call for more substantive work on gender is now well represented in studies documented and conducted by researchers such as Stromquist (1998) and Sutherland and Cammish (1997); while influential comparative studies of international institutions and agencies (Jones, 1992; 1994; Leach, 1994; Arthur and Preston, 1996), the processes of teaching and learning (Broadfoot et al., 1993), privatisation, marketisation and globalisation (Cokolough, 1997; Whitty et al., 1998) and school management and effectiveness in developing countries (Levin and Lockhead, 1993; Harber and Davies, 1997; Bush, 1998) demonstrate considerable attention to the once emergent themes identified by Altbach and Kelly (Crossley 1999, p. 252).
What Crossley went on to argue is that there is currently a genuine resurgence of interest in and commitment to comparative and international education, but that this is primarily a matter of a burgeoning research interest, with associated research training at the fore. While the teaching base is collapsing (as with the other foundations) the research and research-training base of comparative education is rapidly growing. The past decade has seen the establishment of dozens of research centres, joined by many governmental and inter-governmental research bodies driven by a range of international research concerns in education, not least comparative studies of educational performance. Take for example the work of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement; IEA studies continuing to receive widespread political attention as a kind of scholastic Olympics (http://www.iea.nl). What Crossley sees happening is a kind of rapprochement between comparative education and international education, having criticised the former as ‘being too pre-occupied with abstract theoretical scholarship divorced from the real world of educational policy and practice’, the latter being ‘explicitly applied and action-oriented’ (Crossley 1999, pp. 255-256).

What also has to be problematised are the rapidly escalating research commitments in international education by those who would never style themselves as members of the comparative or international education field. In Australia, for example, take the following list of internationally-focussed ARC Large Projects supported over the past decade. Most of these researchers would not regard themselves as members of any comparative education club, but are nevertheless keenly interested (and highly competitive) in researching international education in Australia:

- Sandra Taylor, Fazal Rizvi, Bob Lingard and Miriam Henry, who provided an account of educational policy formation in Australia that provided considerable space for the impact of international policy influence, and whose account prompted their follow-up ARC large project designed to explore the interaction between the OECD and Australian education policy formation (Henry et al. 2001)
- Jan Currie’s international comparative analysis of the impact of globalisation on universities (Currie and Newson 1998)
- Fazal Rizvi and Simon Marginson’s study of the impact of internationalisation strategies on the management of higher education in Australia
- R. W. Connell’s studies of the impact of globalisation on intellectual labour both in Australia and overseas
- and perhaps my own project on the impact of globalisation on patterns of multilateral co-operation in education.

This list begs the question: how do you define a field of study? By disciplinary approach? Well, no longer, it seems. By thematic content? To some extent, to be sure, but to what extent? By the assertion of academic territorial boundaries, with their symbols,
gatekeepers and institutionalised resources? Well, for so long as you can, but that cannot
last in our current academic climate with its crisis of public funding. But while we debate
all this, one thing is certain: whatever it is, the field of comparative and international
education, especially as a research endeavour, has already entered a new golden age. But,
generally speaking, you do not see this in the traditional teaching programs of the
academy – the action is elsewhere.

The problematising of culture, the problematising of disciplinarity and multi-
disciplinarity, and the problematising of western intellectual hegemony lie at the heart of
whatever happened to comparative education. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but
comparative educators were probably well ahead of the game in their attempts to
construct culturally-meaningful frameworks of interpretation that took seriously the
need to adopt multiple frames of reference and units of analysis, the need to challenge
and break down the tyranny in the academy of academic border protection, and the need
to open up new ways of knowing in culturally diverse settings and contexts.

The widening of relevant discourses in comparative and international education,
with multiple frames of reference and units of analysis point to a future marked by
greater recognition of the interdependence of improved theory, policy and practice, with
considerable potential for bridge-building between the various research discourses and
professional cultures involved. The strengthening and revitalisation of its own
institutional base is well underway for comparative and international education, but not
in the ways that we have grown up with. And achieving this in a way that is compatible
with respect for identity and difference might come to be a hallmark of the new role a
reconceptualised and reinvigorated field might enjoy.

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